

Department of English
Carol Hanlon
U.S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
(M/S #025)
P.O. Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

RECEIVED

OCT 16 2001

Re: Waste shipments to Yucca MT Site

Dear Ms. Hanlon:

I am writing to register a strong protest against the plan to ship irradiated fuel rods - high-level nuclear waste - through the center of the country, and through St. Louis in particular. As you know, the Yucca Mountain site is geologically unstable and seismically unsuitable for this purpose, making it a poor choice at best for storing materials with half-lives that extend for tens, hundreds of thousands, and even millions of years. In addition, as *Nature* has recently pointed out, it is most likely that the Department of Energy is "seriously underestimating the risk presented" at the site by volcanoes (see issue of 30 August 2000: 850).

In addition, as recent events have demonstrated, transport accidents unquestionably will happen - and most likely, with relative frequency. A sixty car freight train carrying hazardous chemicals derailed in a tunnel in Baltimore in July; a runaway train sans conductor traveled seventy miles in May before it could be stopped.

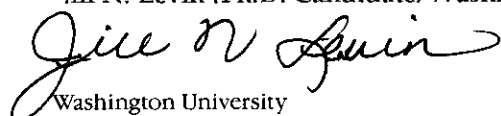
Closer to home, on May 13, 2001, a mere six months ago, a freight train carrying coal derailed no more than five miles from my home, in Webster Groves, a close-in St. Louis suburb, emptying thirteen coal cars just across the street from homes in Webster Groves: **just a little over a mile from my brother's home -- which houses my thirteen-year-old nephew as well as my brother and sister-in-law.**

And finally - and most frighteningly - the tragedy of 11 September has brought home vividly to all of us the dangers of potential sabotage by terrorists, which it may well not be within the power of the NRC's armed escorts to prevent. **If nothing else weighs with you,** this factor should surely cause the NRC to reverse its decision to ship nuclear materials cross-country (most of which would cross our area by truck and rail) to the unstable Yucca Mountain site.

I hope these comments, along with those of my St. Louis area neighbors, will persuade the NRC that the proposed Yucca Mountain plan will put all of us in jeopardy, from the east coast to Utah - and will endanger those of us in the middle of the country in particular. I beg you to reconsider and, further, to devise plans to phase out the generation of reactor wastes which will need to be stored virtually for the life of the planet. Our lives, and especially our children's - **who have no say in this decision, which makes us doubly responsible for protecting them** - will be put at risk unnecessarily by the Yucca Mountain Plan. Please hear our reasoned and informed pleas, and thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Will N. Levin (Ph.D. Candidate, Washington University in St. Louis)



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